

THE SYDNEY
MONTHLY OVERLAND
MAIL.

PER R.M.S. VASCO DA GAMA.
[Via SAN FRANCISCO.]

POLITICAL

The fact that railways and other large works are constructed by the Government, and worked under a department of the State, imparts a political complexion to many undertakings which otherwise would have no such character. Our public debt has been almost wholly incurred for purposes of public improvement, the expenditure having been incurred upon works which in theory, if not in fact, are held to be reproductive. The money spent in making railways is now beginning to fructify. The interest paid by traffic receipts over and above the working expenses of the establishment, has reached 4 per cent., and would, no doubt, considerably exceed that, but for the circumstance that the rates charged for haulage are, in many cases, exceptionally low, the tariff being framed more with a view to encourage agricultural industry than to derive immediate profit. During the month, the Southern line has been opened to Gunning, a distance of upwards of 160 miles from Sydney, and it was the subject of much congratulation that the cost of the last thirty miles opened was under £7000 per mile, or about half the average cost of railway construction hitherto. The reduced cost is chiefly owing to the level nature of the country through which the line has been taken; and as our projected extensions penetrate further to the south and west all engineering difficulties will entirely disappear. The Government have declared their intention of taking measures to extend railways and telegraphs throughout the colony, and having regard to the prosperous state of our finances the time must be considered auspicious. It is much to be regretted, however, that the construction of railways, and indeed of all other public works, is greatly impeded by the want of labour. There is work for 15,000 men on the Government contracts if they could be obtained, and the embarrassment of private employers of labour is equally great. One of the measures to which the Government have pledged themselves in the speech at the opening of Parliament, is to facilitate the introduction into the colony of suitable population; and well-considered legislation to accomplish this result, is considered on all hands to be most desirable.

Parliament was opened by his Excellency the Governor on the 16th instant. The Government took advantage of this opportunity to refer to the administrative reforms which have been brought about during the recess, and they stated their intention to re-impose stamp duties upon an amended system, and to revise the tariff and Customs laws. They also propose to deal with the question of public education, and to provide for the better representation of the people in the Legislative Assembly.

The motion for the adoption of the address in reply gave rise to an animated debate in the Legislative Assembly, the action of the Government in sending the Colonial Treasurer to London, and in appointing members of the Legislative Council to act temporarily as Judges of the Supreme Court, being particularly singled out for adverse criticism. No amendment was moved.

MINING SUMMARY.

Some remarks which appeared in our summary of last month had the effect of directing the attention of the mining community to the draft Mining Bill which had been circulated throughout the country by the Minister for Mines. Some correspondence on the subject has appeared in our columns, and various utterances have been given elsewhere, from the general tenor of which it would appear that in many points the new measure scarcely comes up to the expectations that had been raised. The bill, if it ever passes into law, will probably be remodelled to a very considerable extent, and some matters, such as a provision for the inspection of mines, will most likely be proposed. The Mining Board have again commenced their sessions, but as yet the business has been only of a preliminary nature. Some dissatisfaction seems to have been excited by the fact that the amended regulations, which cost the Board considerable labour during their last sittings, have not yet been gazetted, and consequently have not come into force. The department assign as a reason for the delay the probability of an alteration before long in the mining laws; at the same time they state their willingness to bring into force at once such of the amendments as may be urgently required. As regards the present position of mining affairs throughout the colony there is very little to add to our remarks of last month, except that the protracted drought—in some parts of the colony—has lessened the supply of water to such an extent as to impede the workings. The yield on the whole, however, has not as yet fallen off to any serious degree.

GOLD.

The gold mines continue to exhibit a fair amount of activity, although the alluvial workings in many parts have been delayed through the scarcity of water. Roofing operations are progressing favourably, and fair average returns are being obtained. The following extracts from the letters of our various correspondents will illustrate the present position of affairs.

A correspondent from Wellington supplies us with the following information:—We have been very busy in this district lately. Our mines in the neighbourhood of Mitchell's Creek are beginning to attain some extent. At Pitt's the machinery is daily arriving, and the necessary works for fitting it up are being proceeded with. The Mitchell's Creek Co. have had their crushing works stopped for want of water, the water which they were using in the old shaft running out. They have been waiting some time for part of a pump, which was on the way between Raglan and here about a month, a distance of about 100 miles. The tributaries are still raising good-looking stone, and when the pump is righted the battery will again go to work, and be supplied by their little pumping engine from Mitchell's Creek.

The following items from Parkes are supplied by our correspondent:—In mining matters there is nothing fresh to report. The new lead near the Nibblers is progressing favourably, but more reliable information may be given next time. The last rush, called Strasburg's lead, a gully running westward from Nashville, is, to some extent, a considerable disappointment. The first prospectors have not found payable ground. The second prospectors have had flying prospects of 1 dwt. to the dish, scrapings from the bottom, and little or no wash; here the red flag was hoisted, and no doubt too rashly. No 1 below the red flag is the best claim bottomed with flying or uncertain prospect of 15 grains to the dish, with 9 inches of wash drift. I believe that on this lead those who will be successful in finding golden holes will be lucky in making wages by them. A vast degree of sinking has been accomplished in this locality, but the find unsatisfactory; perhaps sufficient has been discovered to show that the throw of gold has extended northwardly of Parkes, and it may be inferred that some of the many gullies in that direction may yet prove auriferous.

COPPER AND TIN.

The copper mines in the south and west have been tolerably busy, and the workings generally exhibit a creditable amount of activity. In the west some new ground has been opened. A fine lode of copper is reported to have been struck at the Coombing copper mines, in the Carcoar district, which promises to yield a good per centage of metal.

It is very difficult to obtain detailed accounts of our northern tin mines, but the return of ore constantly arriving in Sydney proves that the mines are doing well. Some of the mines at Vegetable Creek in particular are said to be yielding very good returns.

IRON.

Under this head we expect shortly to have good news to report. The Lithgow Valley mines are about to commence operations, with every show of success; and the old and

much-talked-of Fitzroy mines, at Mittagong, now in the hands of an English proprietor, are only waiting the arrival of a new manager to take charge, when operations will be resumed on a scale that will fairly test the capabilities of this district.

OPENING OF PARLIAMENT.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 16.

The second session of the eighth Parliament of New South Wales under Responsible Government was opened by his Excellency the Governor, at the Legislative Council Chamber.

There was a very large attendance of the public, both inside and outside of the Parliamentary buildings. Macquarie-street was densely lined with spectators, and in front of the Council Chambers was drawn up a guard of honour consisting of 'Our Own' and various Companies of the Sydney Battalion, with the Queen's colours, under the command of Captain Davy. The Head-quarters Band, under Lieutenant Callen, was in attendance. Within the Chamber the members of the Legislative Council, the principal, the attorney-general, the solicitor-general, the speaker, the chief clerk, and the clerks of the various departments—exhibited their pasteboard ware from Hunter-street to the Queen's Wharf; and if many people were not provided with tickets for half-a-dozen destinations—Athol Gardens, Cleveland, Chatswood, etc.—before the hour of the opening, it was not the fault of the dealers who so perfidiously anticipated their requirements.

The principal harbour excursions were that in aid of St. Vincent's Hospital, and that in aid of the House of the Good Shepherd, at Athol Gardens and Chatswood Bay; but the most popular excursion was that for Railways, which was to be held at the Circular Quay.

The German Association's picnic to Botany was, like its predecessors, an unqualified success; and the patrons of the Balmain Regatta enjoyed their annual reunion under exceptionally favourable circumstances.

The principal, the attorney-general, the solicitor-general, the speaker, Mr. W. H. Walsh, Speaker of the Queensland Legislative Assembly, Mr. C. Letts, and several other gentlemen, were present.

The excursion train from Gunning to the 9th instant, although the goods trains will run through at once. Two passenger trains went up Tuesday—one a special train from Sydney, and the other a special train from Goulburn. In the former were the Hon. John Luckey, Minister for Works; the Hon. J. F. Burns, Postmaster-General; Mr. M. Fitzpatrick, M.L.A.; Mr. R. Wisdom, M.L.A.; Mr. W. Long, M.L.A.; Mr. J. Whiston, Chief Engineer for Railways; Mr. C. Cracknell, Superintendent of Electric Telegraphs; Mr. W. H. Walsh, Speaker of the Queensland Legislative Assembly; Mr. C. Letts, and several other gentlemen.

The excursion train arrived at Gunning soon after 1 o'clock, and was received with hearty cheers by the throngs of people who had assembled around the station. Two bands that were present struck up the National Anthem in aid of the Hospital, and the band of the Athol Guards, with a hearty accord, all the houses were closed, and flags were flying in all directions. The only drawback to the success of the day was the boisterous westerly wind, which blew a perfect gale, and filled the air with dust to such an extent that it was difficult to see with the greatest difficulty. The interest shown in the ceremony of laying the foundation stone was sustained by the Protestant Hall will be the principal hall of the new Parliament, and the contribution from each of those who took part in the demonstration would for ever place it beyond the reach of debt.

Work at the new public offices which are in course of erection on the block of ground opposite the Treasury has steadily progressed for a period of many months, and the public offices are now beginning to assume a somewhat commanding appearance. They are average to the level of the second floor. The under-taking is one of considerable magnitude, and the contractors appear to be carrying out their work in a very satisfactory manner. The elevation fronting Phillip-street, the grand entrance of the building of the Bank of New South Wales, is very massive in character, but there is sufficient embellishment in the shape of carving, &c., to remove any impression of dullness as is produced by the massive bulk of heavy, unworkable stone. The Macquarie-street end of the building is destined for occupation by the department of the Colonial Secretary, while that facing Phillip-street will probably accommodate the department of Public Works. The other buildings are still in course of erection, and the present time the contractors are renting between thirty and thirty-five private houses at the northern end of the city, much to the confusion of people who have business to do with the different departments.

The usual monthly meeting of the Royal Society of New South Wales was held in the society's rooms, French-street, on Monday evening, 12th November, and Mr. C. Russell was also present. The Rev. W. B. Clarke presided.

The minutes of the last meeting having been read and confirmed, the meeting proceeded to ballot for the election of a new member. Mr. George L. Thompson and Dr. W. J. O'Reilly were duly elected.

The chairman reported the receipt of a number of new members proposed by Mr. Luckey.

The Hon. Mr. C. Letts, and Mr. C. Cracknell, Superintendent of Electric Telegraphs, were present.

Shortly after the conclusion of the banquet, the special train returned to Goulburn, where most of the party remained all night, intending to come on to Sydney by train next morning.

We reprint the speeches delivered by the Hon. Minister for Works and the Engineer-in-Chief for Railways, as far as they are available to us in the following extracts.

Mr. Letts, who was present with shovels, said the extension that had been opened that day was a matter of great moment to that part of the country. It had been sometimes the practice to divert the railway, and say it would do more harm than good after it had gone through a place, and he had been told that the extension to the 9th so far as Gunning was completed.

He felt sure, from the way in which their town was situated, that the railway would be a source of great profit and advancement to it for many years to come. It would always be the centre of a large commercial trade, which in many cases would be more than the population of over a large area. Burrows, Gullen, and all around must come to Gunning, and from the position which Gunning holds the advent of the railway was a matter of very great importance to it. (Applause.) With a smile, he said that the extension to the 9th had put the country in a position to compete with the rest of Europe. The extension to the 9th was to be the next, and the next to that, for which Mr. Whiston returned thanks. "The Contractors" was then proposed, Mr. Williams responding, "The Member for the District," "The Member for the County," and "The Chairman." The motion was carried.

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Hill Boards gold. Is 2d; Krohmann, 2s, 2s 6d; Beyers and Holtermann, 1s 6d; Fischer Beards, 2s 1d, 3s.

At auction in the estate of a deceased mining investor, the following prices were realized:—1000 Brown's gold at 4d each, 1000 Cobah Copper at 5d 10c; 200 Cobalt Copper at 3d, 1000 Cobah Zinc at 1d 5c; 500 ditto at 1d; 1000 1450 ditto at 1d, 800 Krohmann's at 1s 7d, 600 Southern Cobah at 5d 40c, 400 at 2s 4d.

The following table shows the state of the market at close:—

COMPANIES.	Capital (millions)	Capital (millions)	Shares paid up	Price.
BANKS.				
Australian Commercial	1,200,000	1,200,000	600,000	50
Commercial	240,000	240,000	90,000	9 9 1/2
Joint Stock	300,000	500,000	120,000	12 1/2
New South Wales	1,000,000	1,000,000	500,000	10 1/2
North Australia	1,250,000	1,250,000	600,000	50, 54
Port Jackson	120,000	120,000	40,000	25
State	200,000	200,000	100,000	50
Colonial National	1,500,000	1,500,000	600,000	50
SHIPPING BUREAUS.				
N. S. W., terminable	7,873,000	7,873,000	1,071,100	100
British Steamship	240,000	240,000	30,000	100
Government	3,022,000	3,022,000	381,910	100
Bank Treasury Bills	500,000	500,000	60,000	100
A. S. N. C. Co.	100,000	100,000	10,000	71 1/2
City of Sydney	160,100	160,100	16,000	98
Sydney Steam.	100,000	100,000	10,000	100
Colonial Steam Co.	50,000	50,000	6,000	100
TEA.				
Australian	320,000	320,000	20,000	17 1/2
Chatham and Richmond	50,000	50,000	3,000	22 1/2
Hunter River	8,300	8,300	500	12
Blowers	55,000	55,000	3,000	67 1/2
Colonial N. S. W.	37,000	37,000	2,000	11 1/2
ARRIVALS FROM FOREIGN PORTS.				
October 25.— <i>Colpoys Bay</i> , 363, Woolwich, from Plymouth.	160,000	160,000	14	42
October 25.— <i>Sydenham</i> , ship, 1603, Brixton, from the Downs	150,000	150,000	2	22 1/2
OCTOBER 26.— <i>Empress</i> , 714, Liverpool, from Liverpool	250,000	250,000	24	34
OCTOBER 30.— <i>Empress</i> , ship, 714, Liverpool, from Liverpool	100,000	100,000	15	100
OCTOBER 30.— <i>Archie</i> , 1872 to 177	50,000	50,000	14	16
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ARRIVALS FROM ENGLAND.				
OCTOBER 21.— <i>Samuel Pimell</i> , ship, 1544, Bowdon, from Plymouth.	1,200,000	1,200,000	50	84 1/2
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OCTOBER 30.— <i>Archie</i> , 1872 to 177	50,000	50,000	14	16
ARRIVALS FROM FOREIGN PORTS.				
OCTOBER 25.— <i>Colpoys Bay</i> , 363, Woolwich, from the Downs	160,000	160,000	14	42
OCTOBER 25.— <i>Sydenham</i> , ship, 1603, Brixton, from the Downs	150,000	150,000	2	22 1/2
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